

**HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION**

**HISTORIC SIGNIFIGANCE REPORT**

Prepared by Sebastian Herics, B.A, Historic Preservation Intern

Supervisor: Nicole Hernandez, M.F.A., City Architectural Historian

# 621 East Sola Street

Santa Barbara, CA



*Figure 1* 621 Sola Street from: Herics, Sebastian, May 2021. The rest of the photos in this report are by the same author taken on the same day unless otherwise noted.

**Designation Status:** Listed on the Historic Resources Inventory on June 19, 2013 because it was found to be a Contributing Property to a proposed Historic District based on recommendations of Post/Hazeltine Associates.

**Assessor Parcel Number:** 029-033-016

**Constructed:** 1938

**Historic Name:** None

**Architect:** Unknown

**Builder:** Unknown

**Architectural Style:** Minimal Traditional

**Property Type:** Residential

**Original Use:** Residential

**What makes this place historic?**

The property is within the proposed Bungalow Haven Historic District, exemplifying the time at the beginning of the twentieth century when bungalows took America by storm. The typical bungalow was a single-story structure suited to a warm climate, with verandas for outdoor entertainment, overhanging eaves and multiple windows to provide shade and cross-ventilation in the days before air conditioning. These small houses helped fulfill many Americans' wish to own their own home. With climate and economic opportunity drawing more people westward, homey bungalows sprang up rapidly in California. The Ready-Cut Bungalow Company estimates it shipped over 40,000 bungalow kits to Southern California from 1910 through the 1920s. For about \$650 everything you needed to construct a bungalow would be delivered to your lot. Simple and affordable, the bungalow itself became a visual motif, and along with citrus groves and palm trees, was a part of the California setting.



*Figure 2* The simple porch posts of the front raised porch.



*Figure 3* Board-and-batten siding and car garage doors.

The District comprises a collection of over 80% historic bungalows and is a unique area in Santa Barbara within the Lower Riviera neighborhood, developed between circa 1900 and 1940. Bungalows characterize the district, a majority designed in the Craftsman and Spanish Colonial Revival styles. Outside of the district, post-World War II development demolished single-family houses for apartment and condominium complex construction, but this special district still maintains historical integrity, representing Santa Barbara's modest middle- and working-class residential neighborhoods

within the first half of the twentieth century.

Post/Hazeltine Associates found the house in this report retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a **Contributing Property** to the proposed Bungalow Haven Historic District under Criteria 3. The house retains the majority of its character-defining elements, including its combination of wide horizontal siding and board and batten siding, exterior shutters, and multi-pane windows, therefore contributing to the visual and physical integrity of the Bungalow Haven Historic District.

### Property Description:

This is a Minimal Traditional style house set into a sloping hillside. Living area is primarily on the second level, with a one-car garage on the first. Side gabled roof is covered in composition shingles. Roof extends over the open porch and is supported by narrow square wood piers. The porch, which runs the length of the house, has a balustrade consisting of narrow railings. Wall cladding consists of wide horizontal wood siding on the second level, with vertical wood board and batten siding surrounding the garage level. Windows are multi-paned, double hung sash type, flanked by wood shutters.

City Directory:

1935: no listing

1940: W. H. Henderson, Plymouth & De Soto Auto Sales

1945: J. B. Wilcott, salesman, wife, Marcia

1951-55: Elsie Hunt, real estate

### Historic Integrity:

“Integrity” is how well a historic place or resource represents the period or theme for which it is being recognized for. To prove “Integrity,” researchers use the National Register of Historic Place’s definition of “Integrity.” For the National Register, Integrity is determined by the historic resource’s Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association (Integrity, 44). 621 East Sola Street maintains its integrity because it successfully conveys its circa 1930 appearance, contributing to the integrity of the Bungalow Haven Historic District.

### Historical Significance:

“Historical Significance” is a term used by the city to call a place historical. A place earns “Historical Significance” if it meets one or all of the criteria listed below in the City of Santa Barbara. The Landmarks Commission and City Council decides whether or not, based on these criteria, if a historical place is a Historic Landmark or a Structure of Merit (Chapter 30.157). A place may also be historical as a Contributing property to a Landmark District, or a Historic District (Chapter 30.57). This building was designated a **Contributing Property**, because it:

**Meets Criteria 3:** *It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, architectural style or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic or historic value, or represents a significant and distinguishable collection whose individual components may lack distinction;*

The property’s Minimal Traditional character represents the Bungalow Haven Historic District, which preserves a middle- and working-class neighborhood developed between the 1900s and 1940s.

Minimal Traditional homes are characterized by their boxy massing and symmetry, with no frills and simple decoration. Other notable character defining features of Minimal Traditional style exhibited at this property are:

- Simple porch posts and lack of additional décor on gables, balustrade, or cornices



- Sashed double-hung wood windows throughout flanked by colonial-like shutters
- Horizontal wood siding and board-and-batten siding
- Double-garage doors

Minimal Traditional homes are important because they represent American architecture built between the turbulent years of 1936 to 1950, which saw the Great Depression, the Second World War, and post-war housing shortages (McAlester, 588).

Known as “the little house that could,” Minimal Traditional homes were designed to survive the Great Depression. In the aftermath of Black Tuesday, the housing industry virtually collapsed as banks closed, mortgages went unpaid, and construction halted. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was founded in 1934 to produce affordable homes during the downturn, and published *Principles of Planning Small Houses* in 1936 as a part of that effort. The *Principles* extolled the virtues of small-scale living, emphasizing a simple envelope and efficient floorplan to maximize space to keep costs low. It would be republished into the 1950s, attesting to the need for affordable quick-built housing in the first half of the twentieth century. As FHA-backed loans went out to construct FHA-designed homes, America entered World War Two in 1941, creating new industries overnight (McAlester, 589).

As workers migrated across the States for war production, the Minimal Traditional houses were there to meet the demand. To speed up necessary wartime housing construction, builder-developers discovered the benefits of on-site and off-site pre-fabrication and assembly-line practices in home construction. The self-taught efficiency found during wartime would benefit the same developers after the end of World War Two, as a huge influx of home-seeking veterans returned to the States, inspiring suburbia. Suburban living and its speedy construction found its lessons in the Depression and war. By 1950, the Minimal Traditional home began to be replaced by

Ranch styled homes (McAlester, 589), but not before leaving its major twentieth century legacy behind on the American streetscape, including Santa Barbara’s in the Historic District.

Extensive development did not occur within the Bungalow Haven Historic District until after 1901, when the Southern Pacific Railroad Company linked Los Angeles to Northern California

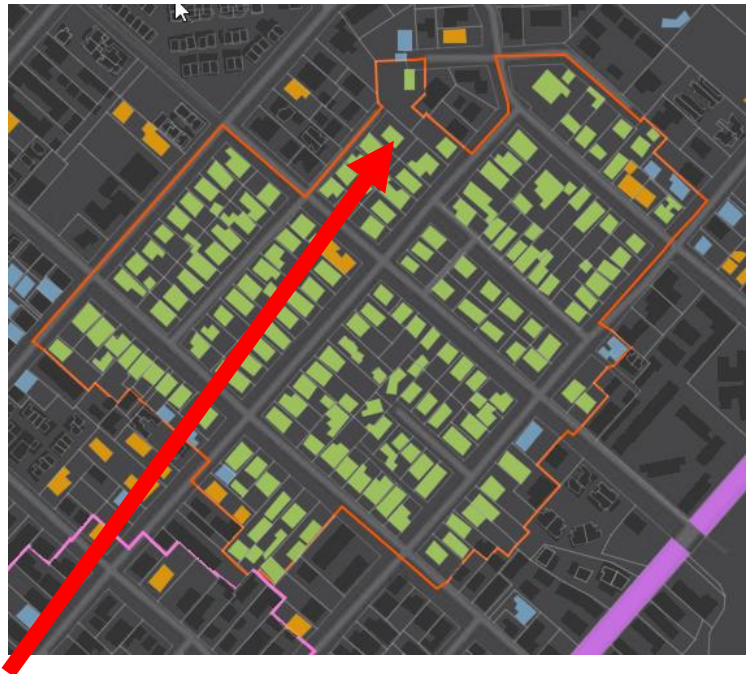


Figure 4 Location of the house within the Bungalow Haven Historic District from: Community Development, City of Santa Barbara. *Proposed Bungalow Haven Historic District*, 2021.

with a coastal railroad. With the northern segment of the rail line completed, an economic boom shortly followed in Santa Barbara, largely tied to the City's expanding resort industry. With the additional construction of an expanded rail yard, the building or expansion of hotels, and the opening of the State Normal School in 1913, thousands of workers were drawn to the city. Santa Barbara's population nearly quintupled between 1900 to 1940, from 7,000 residents to 34,000. Within walking distance of downtown, the Bungalow Haven neighborhood expanded accordingly (Community Development).

The neighborhood also reflects changing trends in architecture, transportation and town planning. It was characterized by modest, one-story, bungalow, frame houses, most often designed in the Craftsman and Spanish Colonial Revival styles with intact early twentieth century streets, curbs, and sidewalks. Over half the houses in the District are in the Craftsman style, which was a typical trend in modest neighborhoods developing throughout the state during the early twentieth century. Retaining its essential integrity of setting, design, and association, the District conveys the essential qualities of its period of significance (1900-1940). Therefore, the District exemplifies the characteristics that typified Santa Barbara's modestly scaled residential neighborhoods of the early twentieth century, peopled with working and middle-class Santa Barbarans (Community Development).

### Works Cited

Community Development, City of Santa Barbara. *Proposed Bungalow Haven Historic District*.

<https://www.santabarbaraca.gov/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=35953>.

"How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property" in *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, National Register Bulletin NRB 15,

[https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB-15\\_web508.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB-15_web508.pdf).

McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2017.